There are a few Karens in the ranges of hills as far north as a line running through Thayetmyo and Pyinmana. 101 131 To the east, Loikaw is a Karen district and Karens are found farther eastward in Thailand. For the most part the Karens share their localities with the Burmans and Shans. Their villages are now found scattered over the plains as well as the hills in Lower Burma all the way from Pyinmana to Victoria Point and from Arakan to some indefinite line in Thailand. It has been reported that there are a few scattered Karen communities even as far east as Cambodia, but they have been pretty well absorbed by the more aggressive surrounding races.

During the unsettled Burmese times they clung to the hills and the remote forests for their security and wrested a precarious living there, but with the more peaceful conditions brought about by the settled British Government they spilled over into the plains and, clearing tracts of forest for villages and tracts for paddy fields, they settled down and became prosperous. Therefore they may now be found in every district of Lower Burma. In such sections as around Bassein, Pyapon, Pegu, Thaton, Moulmein, and Tavoy they comprise a very considerable minority of the population. 178 361 104 433

In the hills the Karen villages are usually at the top of a ridge. The houses are close together and in some places they are surrounded by a stockade of bamboo with sharp pickets pointing outward to reinforce the fence. There are seldom more than twenty to thirty houses in a village. 361

When they build on the plains they usually select a site away from the roads where they will attract least attention and be free from intrusion. Often in the villages there is little attempt at orderly arrangement of the houses.

10: Marshall M-5 (ca. 1910) 1945 AP1 Burma
Karen AP7

141 Young people of both sexes are attractive and robust,
[146] but hard work, undernourishment and, in the case of the women, constant child-bearing often make them appear old when they have only reached what should be the prime of life.

591 428 596 Family life among the Karens is not unlike that of the ordinary European family. They do not have the patriarchial family system of the Chinese, and each married couple usually has its own house in which to live. Often the woman brings her young husband to live with her parents and he inherits their lands on their decease.

582 163 165 Marriage in the early days was strictly within the tribe. Even marriage with those of other Karen tribes was looked down upon. Karen women usually bear as many as ten or more children, but often raise less than half of them,

858 888 due to their lack of knowledge of sanitation. Karen fathers are usually fond of their children and take as good care of them as they know how. Their love is generally sentimental and children are allowed to rule the household. Old people usually receive good care for the Karens always reverence age.

IV

OCCUPATIONS

243 433 In the early days the Karens were concerned with wresting a living for themselves from the ground where they lived. Almost without exception they were cultivators of the soil and raised rice, their principal food. They followed the two methods usually found in Burma, the mountain method in the hills and the paddy-field method on the plains.

243 In the hills the wasteful way of cultivating rice was that of clearing a section, called in Burmese a *taung-ya*,

10: Marshall M-5 (ca. 1910) 1945 AP1 Burma
Karen AP7

In the early 1900's many Karens who had cleared immense tracts of land raised large crops of paddy and became well-to-do. It was then that they employed many Burman and Indian coolies to work for them. They built substantial houses, often of teak, or in a few instances of brick. Some of them were able to add field to field and became really wealthy. It was at this time that money-lenders became very active and going about the villages imposed loans of easy money on the unsuspecting cultivators. These loans were then allowed to lie idle for a year or two until the interest, set at exorbitant rates, mounted to nearly double the original loans, when a sudden demand for full payment could not be met ; and the results were that the lending sharks foreclosed on the rich paddy-fields. In this way many a Karen who was once a prosperous cultivator became a tenant on land that he had previously owned. This process continued until near the time of the invasion and the property, land, houses and cattle of the Karens as well as of Burman cultivators, were largely in the hands of absentee landlords. The Indian Tamil Chettiars were the most numerous class of money-lenders and most exacting in demanding their pounds of flesh.

In only a few cases have the Karens proved to be good traders. They are too soft-hearted and often sell on credit which they feel embarrassed to collect, and therefore they soon fail. The shops in the Karen villages in the hills are most often kept by the Shans who are born traders. On the plains the Chinese have found the Karen villages good places to make money. They begin in a small way and soon, by lending money, collecting their debts by foreclosing on the land, and sometimes by selling

19: Marshall M-5 (ca. 1910) 1922 AP1 Burma
Karen AP7

CHAPTER X

AGRICULTURAL PURSUITS AND OTHER OCCUPATIONS

In the Hills

The Karen's chief occupation is the cultivation of the most important article of his diet, namely, rice. Throughout the Orient this grain is called "paddy" during all the stages of its growth and curing, until it is husked and polished ready for cooking. The method of cultivation in the hills is widely different from that on the plains. We shall consider the former first, as it is more primitive and, until recently, was practiced by far the larger number of the people. In Burma this more primitive method is often spoken of as the "ya" cultivation, from the Burmese word designating it. It is characteristic of this cultivation that a new hill field, called "hku" in Karen, has to be selected, cleared, and burned off each year. The planting of the grain must follow immediately after all seeds and small roots have been destroyed by fire, or no crop can be raised with the primitive implements in use, on account of the rapid resuscitation of the jungle. The ashes from the consumed vegetation act as a fertilizer, without which the crop would scarcely be worth the reaping. At the present time the Government so limits the areas open to the Karen for cultivation in some districts that a sufficient interval does not elapse between plantings to allow the growth of enough timber for the production of the ashes necessary to fertilize the soil properly. Hence, crop production is declining in these districts. At least seven years should intervene before a plot is cleared and planted a second time, and even this period is too short for the production of the best crops.[1]

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[1]The "ya" cultivation, it is obvious, is most destructive of the forests. Unsuccessful efforts have been put forth to induce the Karen in the hills to give it up. It has been suggested that the people keep gardens and raise produce for sale. This proposal overlooks the lack of adequate roads for transporting the crops to market. The Karen are backward about engaging in new undertakings. They raise their food and obtain what else they need by barter. Until recently this mode of living has sufficed for them. They have not been accustomed to handling money or making it last long.

With the introduction of new ideas and the increase of mining concessions and forest restrictions, changes are inevitable and should be planned for, especially as the granting of new mining concessions will increase the number of outsiders. It has seemed to the present writer that "ya" cultivation might be limited to a term of years, during which a number of British